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H.E. Mr. Úmaro Sissoco

Embaló

President of the Republic of
Guinea-Bissau

Bissau – Guinea Bissau

Wednesday, 11 January 2023

O/R.: 003/2023/GS/AK

Dear Mr. President,

ITUC-Africa Protests Guinea Bissau's Government efforts to muzzle and undermine the independence Trade Unions.

I am writing on behalf of the African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation, ITUC-Africa¹, (www.ituc-africa.org) to register our deep concern about your government's efforts to muzzle and undermine the functioning and independence of trade unions in your country, specifically, the União Nacional dos Trabalhadores da Guiné Central Sindical (UNTG-CS).

It has come to our knowledge that your government has, for a protracted time, been trying to undermine the elected leadership of UNTG-CS, their freedom of association, and also to split the national centre by facilitating the registration of the same union. These attempts are authoritarian, undemocratic and retrogressive. We strongly urge your government to discontinue these actions.

As a reminder, trade unions are supposed to be independent organisations - operating without any undue external influence. National instruments such as the constitution, International Labour Organisation's (ILO) Conventions (notably C.87 and 98) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), all canonise this right. For further emphasis, as a State and government, Guinea Bissau ratified the ILO Conventions 87 and 98 that upholds the existence and independence of unions. It is, therefore, worrying that you have deployed the whole government machinery with the aim to curtail human and labour rights of Guinea Bissau workers.

Mr. President, our worry is informed by the fact that your government's interference with trade union administration and undermining of the right to freedom of association

¹ The ITUC-Africa represents over 17 million workers from 52 African countries.

will trigger unnecessary and avoidable crises in the industrial relations milieu. Trade unions are necessary and important partners in national economic development and stakeholders in the promotion of industrial harmony. We strongly urge your government to focus on ways and means of ensuring effective and inclusive mobilisation for nation-building. The action to replicate an existing trade union is a direct provocation that may trigger industrial unrest.

Finally, ITUC-Africa implores you and your government to embrace and utilise the mechanism of social dialogue to improve relations with the trade unions and other stakeholders. Targeting trade unions who represent workers that are facing difficult working and living conditions will not ameliorate the underlying economic problems that Guinea Bissau is facing.



Kwasi Adu-Amankwah
General Secretary, ITUC-Africa

Cc

1. **Africa Union**
2. **ECOWAS**
3. **UNTG-CS**